

NATO IN THE AGE OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Ambassador Martin Erdmann
Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy – NATO
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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by saying how much I appreciate the opportunity to appear before such a distinguished audience, and to discuss with you the evolution of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and what it means for the relationship between NATO and Japan.

Let me also say that my delegation had excellent and result-oriented consultations over more than eight hours yesterday on practical steps of NATO-Japan cooperation after the groundbreaking visit of Prime Minister Abe to NATO in January.

It is now more than 17 years ago since NATO and Japan first started to develop more structured contacts. As a result of a joint initiative, we organised a NATO-Japan conference on the Belgian coast in 1990. At that time, no one knew exactly what to expect. As our then Secretary General, my fellow countryman Manfred Wörner, put it, it was an experiment – an exploration of possibilities between friendly but distant relatives.

Manfred Wörner had great hopes that the relationship would grow. He believed strongly that Japan, like NATO, was a part of the larger Western security system. He pointed out that we have a commonality of democratic values and political interests, and that we share a very important security partnership with the United States. He saw clearly that Japan and NATO would benefit greatly from a regular exchange of views.

In the event, the “experiment” we conducted on that rainy day at the Belgian coast turned out to be a real success. Japan-NATO conferences became a regular part of the NATO calendar, and diplomatic contacts steadily increased. As relatives go,

we became less and less distant. And the late Manfred Wörner would certainly be proud to see what we have achieved together.

But have we achieved enough? When we started to develop more structured NATO-Japan contacts back in 1990, we lived in quite a different world. The Cold War had just come to an end, and we compared notes on what we considered to be the dominant issues of our time, notably the implications of a possible collapse of the Soviet Union. New, asymmetric threats, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or international terrorism, seemed of secondary importance at the time. 9/11 was not even conceivable.

Today we live in an entirely new era. Never have we been confronted with more rapid and more fundamental international change. And never before has the international environment confronted us with so many contradictions. Globalisation continues to open up economies, create new wealth, and connect many regions to the global economy. Yet we also increasingly see globalisation's darker side – as a vehicle for importing radicalism, fanaticism and terrorism into our own societies.

The rapid progress in information technology offers a similarly ambivalent balance sheet. Modern means of communication can be tools for spreading information, and making it possible for many more people to participate in the global exchange of ideas. But we also witness how these same means of communication can be misused to spread intolerance and outright hatred.

The same networks that allow money and information to be transferred instantly across borders can also be used by criminal networks to traffic virtually any commodity, whether it is laundered money, people, missile components, or fissile materials. And as a result, countries that seek nuclear status, from North Korea to Iran, are given unprecedented opportunities to realise their nuclear ambitions, even in the face of stern international opposition.

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The contradictions do not end here. In some parts of the world, countries decide to associate, and even integrate, to better cope with the challenges posed by globalisation. And the European Union is the best example of that tendency and even a model second to none in the world.

Elsewhere, however, states disintegrate into anarchy – into ungoverned spaces that provide a safe haven for terrorist training camps or the international narcotics trade. Afghanistan is perhaps the best example of that worrying trend, but there are more. Look at Somalia, Sudan and several other countries in Africa that are close to disintegration.

In the past, we could afford to be complacent about developments that happened far away. Geography was our shield. Oceans, deserts and mountains offered us protection. In Europe, for decades, the Cold War had frozen the geo-political realities into a big ice block. But today? Today, globalisation has once and for all eliminated the notion of achieving safety by geographical distance. Geography no longer serves as a buffer to chaos and instability farther afield. In other words, the security of all our nations is more and more affected by what is happening elsewhere on the globe.

So the challenge for us today is clear. We need to use the driving forces of globalisation to our own advantage. We need to tackle the darker side of globalisation without compromising globalisation's benefits.

How? By thinking and organising ourselves differently than we did in the past. By saying goodbye to the outdated security paradigms of yesterday. And, above all, by exploring new approaches of security cooperation – reaching out beyond geographical, cultural or religious boundaries.

NATO has taken this logic to heart. This Alliance came about almost 58 years ago, in very different circumstances from today's. NATO was brought into existence by

the Cold War. It was a transatlantic Alliance created to address the specific security challenges of a divided Europe.

That past is long gone. And just as the Cold War has long disappeared, so has the old Cold War NATO Alliance. Today, security cooperation in NATO – between North America and a Europe that is increasingly whole and free – has acquired a fundamentally different character. We are no longer concerned with the defence of Europe against the threat of an invasion by thousands of tanks. NATO is no longer oriented towards static territorial defence with large armies. Instead, cooperation in NATO today is all about finding new answers to new challenges – the very challenges that I described just a minute ago.

What, in concrete terms, distinguishes this new NATO from the old? Three points stand out.

The first and perhaps most visible aspect of today's NATO is the way we look at security. In a nutshell, we have realised that a territorial understanding of security is simply too narrow in an age of global threats. Rather than wait for the challenges to come to us, we must be prepared to meet the challenges where they emerge – even if that may mean deploying far away from our traditional European perimeter.

Today, more than 50,000 troops are deployed under NATO command, in missions and operations on three continents – from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Hindu Kush. In Europe, NATO is keeping the peace in the Balkans, notably in Kosovo where we are facing a challenging period in the context of the status settlement. In the Mediterranean, we are conducting naval anti-terrorist patrols. In Afghanistan, our most important and difficult mission, NATO is leading the International Security Assistance Force, a mission that ranges from peacekeeping to reconstruction tasks and to combat operations. In Iraq, NATO is training Iraqi security forces. In Pakistan, after the earthquake in 2005, NATO provided humanitarian relief. And in Africa, NATO is airlifting African Union peacekeeping troops to the crisis region of Darfur.

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This is a broad spectrum of activities indeed – and some have raised the question whether NATO is trying to take on every problem thrown up by globalisation. I can reassure you that this is not the case. If we would try to do that, we would fail. Our strength lies clearly in stabilisation operations. We have a range of invaluable assets. Integrated military forces; a well-established and tried and tested political-military decision making structure; and a network of partner countries and troop contributing nations from across the globe. And these capabilities and assets combined have enabled us to prevail even in the most trying circumstances in Afghanistan.

In an age where threats to our security can emerge from anywhere in the world, where distance has lost all meaning, and barriers to the movement of people, technology and ideas – both good and bad – have collapsed, we know that we have to take a pro-active stance to promote stability and security. But we also know that this is not possible by winning military victories in the classic sense – that we need to help build efficient institutions, and to work closely together with local and other international actors.

Whether in Bosnia, Kosovo or Afghanistan, NATO's aim is not to stay forever, but to help achieve self-sustaining peace. In other words, the capacity of the countries themselves to stand on their own feet, and no longer to rely on us for their stability and security.

Which brings me to the second characteristic of today's NATO, which are its developing relations with other institutions. In the Balkans and in Afghanistan, we know that we cannot succeed with military forces alone, but that we have to work closely with others. Security and development are two sides of the same coin. That is why rather than try to deal with Afghanistan alone, we are constantly calling on the United Nations, the European Union, the World Bank and other institutions to contribute their expertise and resources to this common effort. Only such a comprehensive approach will allow us to achieve lasting benefit from our considerable military investment, and the sacrifices made by soldiers from NATO and partner countries.

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Indeed, at NATO Headquarters today, we are studying hard on how we can make our interaction with other organisations, and even NGOs, more regular and more substantive, so that we can pool our resources and work according to an integrated political-military strategy.

And this brings me to the third characteristic of NATO today: its partnerships with other nations. During the Cold War, NATO did not really need other countries to fulfil its essential security mission of self defence. Allied solidarity was enough. But today, as we send our forces on complex missions well away from our traditional area of operations, we realize full well just how much the success of these missions depends on the contribution by other nations, and notably our partners. Some partners help us with military bases, air fields and transit rights. Some provide forces to our missions, and some provide us with intelligence and expertise.

But our partners benefit, too. NATO is a framework that they can use to make their own contributions more effective. And our many NATO partnership programmes provide these countries with material help and expertise in reforming their military forces and taking care of their own security problems. In sum, when NATO enters into a partnership with another country, it is a relationship that benefits both.

So what does all this mean for the future of Japan-NATO relations? Well, simply put, that our relationship is bound to gain in importance – and in substance.

Like the NATO Allies, Japan has demonstrated an increasing readiness and ability to assume security responsibilities well beyond its own borders. For example, since the mid-1990s, Japan has played a most welcome role in the Balkans region. It was NATO that helped to end the war in this volatile part of Southeast Europe, but it was with the help of Japan that we were able to win the peace as well. Japan's contribution as a major donor nation has played an important part in the successful recovery of the Balkans region, as well as its reintegration into the European mainstream.

In Afghanistan, Japan's generosity and pragmatism are even more visible today. Japan's strong support for the Afghanistan compact and its commitment to the reconstruction of this country are valued by the entire international community. Japan's efforts in the disbandment of illegal armed groups and in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former military combatants are among the most successful projects in Afghanistan. And we also welcome Japan's willingness to support a Law and Order Trust Fund in order to strengthen police activities, and to support capacity development at both the central and the community level.

What all this demonstrates is that, more and more, Japan and NATO have converging security interests, and are working together effectively to meet common objectives. And that makes Japan, the country in Asia with which NATO has the longest-standing relationship, a truly unique partner for the Alliance.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given the changes of the global environment and the evolution of NATO, given the unique nature of 21st century stabilisation operations, and Japan's increasing role as an international provider of security, the time has clearly come to open a new chapter in our relationship.

In NATO, we see Japan as a natural partner in our efforts to achieve a more stable international system. We have many common interests. Our challenge is to continue to turn these common interests into common action. And I am confident that, together, we will meet that challenge.

Thank you.